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ABSTRACT

The successful English-as-a-second-language reading teacher must understand the cultural background of her students very well and must take such circumstances into account in the presentation of and the approach to materials. Following a good basic teaching model is equally important. Evaluation of the reading program must consider the students' feeling toward the program and their accomplishments, and the sequential development of reading skills. (VM)

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READING IN THE ESL PROGRAM

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I have been asked to discuss the reading component of the English as a second language class. This paper will discuss the qualifications of the reading teacher; a few ethnic cultural differences; implications of the culture of poverty; a detailed reading lesson; and the evaluation of a successful reading program.

Teacher Qualifications:

The reading teacher must possess the basic knowledge that is required to teach any group of children. She must know how children learn; human growth and development; and methods for developmental and corrective reading.

But this is general information that everyone certified to teach must know. To be an effective English as a second language reading teacher, the variations and adaptions of this information become crucial. The ESL reading teacher also has to know and be sensitive to much more. When should a certain strategy be used to teach a certain idea to a given child? Is the emphasis the same for all children regardless of ethnic background? Questions such as these can be formulated by the dozen. The answers aren't always apparent.

Cultural Differences:

In order to start formulating some of the answers, the reading

teacher of bilingual youngsters must understand the fundamental differences in value orientations of the Spanish speaking and of the Anglo-American world. She must be able to compare and contrast the beliefs, mores, traditions, and customs of these two groups of people. She needs it in order to understand the child well enough to plan and execute reading activities that will bring the child success.

Zintz, a pioneer in ESL education, has said:

> Most teachers have middle class values. This means the teachers come from homes where the drive for achievement and success causes parents to "push" their children to climb the ladder of success, where "work for work's sake" is important, and where everyone is oriented to future-time values. To teach the child successfully the teacher must recognize that the child may come to school with a radically divergent set of values and the teacher must try to understand, not disparage, these values.[1]

Cultural differences can be elusive and lost in words, with little filtering down into classroom practices. Each teacher will have to address herself to some basics. She will have to know the value systems of her students. How do the child's "people" feel about dependence and independence? If the Spanish culture values dependence, how much will the teacher have to help the child toward understanding independence before he meets with success in reading?

What does the teacher know about the sex roles in the Spanish culture? Certinly this has tremendous implication for the classroom. Male and female roles are sharply defined. Could some of the reading activities be seen as not very masculine?

Traditional Spanish-speaking boys' roles and activities are very different from girls'. Boys may not play "sissy" games such as playing "house." Girls cannot participate in "rough" games. Later on, in childrens' role-play, boys may not play "female" roles. In sports, strenuous ones are for boys and more "ladylike" ones are for girls.

The boys' behavior is usually the "bossy" type because he learns that the male is the head of the group. He makes most final decisions. The female role is more passive and makes final decisions only in emergencies. Usually a male is consulted before any action is undertaken. The male is the one who attempts to earn the living for the family while the female takes care of the home. Implications for reading?

What about cooperation versus competition? Does the teacher punish youngsters because they tend to help their less fortunate classmates by passing notes with correct answers or even whispering? (It's called cheating in some circles.) Perhaps in a culture where cooperation has been a way of life, competition will have to be taught? Is reading success hinging on this?

What does family mean to these students? Father, mother, and two youngsters? What is the implication for developing concepts in the reading class if the youngster visualizes family as consisting of many grown-ups - compadres, aunts, uncles, all the loved ones that surround him - not necessarily related by blood. No, the extended family does not mean the parents and fourteen children.

Many examples can be given to illustrate the importance of the teacher knowing the values of the Spanish culture in order for her and her students to meet with success in reading in the ESL classroom. The teacher must know this before she can even hope that her pupils will make a successful adjustment to a new language and to a new school environment.

Combs reminds us that,

> The individual in a particular culture perceives those aspects of his environment that, from his point of view, he needs to perceive to maintain and enhance himself in the world in which he lives. This does not mean he makes fewer perceptions than an individual in another culture. He makes only different perceptions.[2]

Cultural differences are real. And if the United States is sincere in cultural pluralism, and I choose to believe it is, it will actively perserve these differences. The teacher must become a leader in this new and worthwhile endeavor. Much can be done by the ESL reading teacher to promote understanding of this process.

Culture is the context within which the child's experiences occur. We need to first understand the context in order to appreciate the meaning of an experience. What experiences has the child had? The child must start reading that which he is familiar! This would remove the familiar remark, "He calls out the words correctly, but he doesn't know what they mean."

Culture of Poverty:

The culture of poverty must not be confused with ethnic cultural differences. Belonging to a minority group does not necessarily mean one is poor. If the students are of the lower social classes, the teachers will still need to know ethnic cultural differences. Since poverty cuts across ethnic lines, they will be wise to also study social class differences. They will in turn relate this information to classroom behavior.

Perhaps the manner of thinking is a major difference in middle class and lower class youngsters. Lower class students tend to think more in concrete terms. Their environment has conditioned them to think in this manner before they go to school. Before real success in reading is possible, the teacher will have to help them learn to abstract.

If the Mexican-American child is from the upper or middle social class, he should have very few problems with reading comprehension if the language is taught well. But if he is from the lower social class, he will need to read about that which he has already experienced before he can read about other experiences with a high degree of under-

standing. His needs are different. Reinforcing this thought, Tireman said,

> Intellectual growth is dependent upon concepts and concepts are dependent upon experience.[3]

The reading teacher must understand the Spanish culture and the social class differences of her students. In addition, and much more important, the teacher believes and actively demonstrates that her students come from a "respectable culture, are worthy individuals, and can succeed."[4]

Reading in the ESL Classroom:

In addition to the teacher requirements mentioned above, there are other "musts" to be taken care of. In some classrooms everything is going relatively well. But in many classrooms reading is introduced too soon; students are pushed before they are ready for this experience. In other classrooms, reading is presented too late. These pupils, consequently, have lost interest in reading and the process has to be started anew.

In the conversion to English as a second language techniques emphasizing the listening and speaking components, reading is overlooked altogether in some classrooms. Reading is an asset and a must in any classroom. It can be used to advantage in reinforcing the speech that is being learned.

Those students who are beginning to learn the language, regardless of age, should be treated as "beginning to read" students. They have learned a few structures. They can "hear" them, they can "produce" them, they know what they mean and they can "use" them without teacher prompting. These students are ready to be presented with the written symbols.

The "advanced" students are those who have been studying the language a longer time but still do not completely function as native

speakers. They, too, need reading classes geared to meet their special needs.

Another requirement is that reading lessons should follow a good, basic teaching model. For discussion purposes today, Glaser's model with minor modifications, will be used.[5] The four components of the teaching process are objectives, entering behaviors, instructional procedures, and performance assessment. Each component and variation will be briefly discussed in relation to an ESL reading lesson.

A diagram of the model follows.

Instructional Objectives	Entry Behaviors	Teaching Strategies	Pupil Activities	Evaluation
1.	1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.	2.
etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
			Materials	
			1.	
			etc.	

Before discussing each part of the lesson, remember that seldom, if ever, is an entire lesson finished at one time. It is spaced over a period of time which is decided by the teacher as she observes the pupil's progress. Many times a reading lesson will last a week or longer.

"BEGINNING TO READ" STUDENT

Component One: Behavioral Objective

The objective must state the expected changes of behavior in the student. It must be very specific. All that see it will interpret it exactly the same way.

Example: After reading the title and studying the picture

the student will be able to predict at least two possibilities as to the author's reason for such a title.

Component Two: Entry Behavior

This tells what the student must know before the lesson is presented. It can be from one, two, or all three of the domains, cognitive, affective, and/or psychomotor.

Examples:
1. Students can already freely discuss ideas.
2. Studencs can think beyond specific word meaning.

Component Three: Teaching Strategies

The teaching strategies must be selected carefully.

Examples:
1. Questions which require recall of specific information.
2. The teacher accepts, clarifies, and uses student ideas.

The strategies may be divided into smaller parts.

Example: (First Part)

a. Motivate interest.
b. Clarify concepts.
c. Oral practice of sentence patterns through choral work.

(Second Part)

Presentation of graphic symbols.

a. Oral practice with emphasis on correlating visual forms to the oral language pattern.
b. Special intensive practice. (For example:

flash card drills.)

(Third Part)
Reading in books, experience charts, or on chalkboard.

a. Choral reading practice after modeling.
b. Correlation of this practice with silent reading when possible.

(Frequently check on pupil's comprehension during the class.)

Component Four: Pupil Activities

Examples:
1. Relate title to pictures and vocabulary presented previously to try to determine author's reason for title.
2. Child will relate feelings.

This component may also include follow-up or enrichment activities. It can include word study, such as phonetic analysis, structural analysis, or vocabulary development.

Component Five: Evaluation

Keeping check on the pupils not achieving success is the simplest way of evaluating. Record names of those who didn't meet the objective.

Examples: Pupils not participating.
1.
2.

Pupils who offered answers seldom:
1.
2.

Following the above steps carefully will help insure success for the "beginning to read" students.

The "Advanced" Student:

The third part under teaching strategies will vary for the "advanced" student when compared to what has just been suggested for the "beginning to read" student. The work for him will be the following:

Third Part ("Advanced" Student)

1. Formulate patterns from the longer sentences in the story.
2. Have oral pre-reading practice of the short patterns.
3. Establish a purpose for silent reading.
4. Silent reading.
5. Check on comprehension through conversational or directed written composition.
6. Oral reading for a purpose only.

The "advanced" student functions almost like a native English speaker but he still needs some oral practice in his directed reading lesson.

In addition to, or during the directed reading lesson, work needs to be done with idiomatic expressions, words with multiple meanings, and analogies. These are sensitive areas for a student learning English as a second language.

Idioms are almost always interpreted in their literal sense if the teacher does not teach them specifically. Teachers who have Mexican-American students learning to read English should examine workbooks and find exercises that clarify meaning. They can also encourage the students to draw illustrations or dramatize them to depict meaning. Idioms must be taught; otherwise they can seriously interfere with reading progress.

The same applies to words with multiple meanings and analogies.

Teachers must find time to have students study them carefully. All the "right" things being done for students may be lost if these matters don't get "undivided" attention every day.

Evaluation:

The teacher of Mexican-American students knows when she has a successful reading program by asking herself a few questions. First, do the students have a positive self concept? Do they feel good about themselves? Do they think they have something to contribute? Do they like themselves? Are they meeting with success?

Secondly, what are their attitudes toward reading? Do they think it a necessary skill? Do they enjoy it? Do they think they can use what they are learning now?

Thirdly, is the program based on a sequential development of reading skills? Is the program completely individualized?

If the answers are yes to most of these questions, los niños apprenderán a leer en Inglés.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Miles V. Zintz, Corrective Reading (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, 1966), p. 121.

[2]A. W. Combs, "Intelligence From a Perceptual Point of View," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 47:665, 1952.

[3]L. S. Tireman, Teaching Spanish-Speaking Children (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1948), p. 62.

[4]Mari-Luci Ulibarri, "Cultural Differences Revealed Through Language," (Albuquerque: The Minority Group Cultural Awareness Center, 1970). Monograph.

[5]Robert Glaser, "Psychology and Instructional Technology," Training Research and Education, ed. R. Glaser, (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1962), p. 6.